

Tell Me a Piece of Your History That You're Proud to Call your Own by TheMikeWheelers (jasongracefully)

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Summary:

Three years after the events of 1983, Hawkins National Lab closes and El goes to confront the place that took everything from her.

Tell Me a Piece of Your History That You're Proud to Call your Own

Author's Note:

This came from the prompt "Things you said when it was all over"

I feel like this isn't the greatest writing but I've had this idea for a while and I really wanted to try writing it.

Also I swear when I started I didn't set out for it to be as angsty as it became don't hate me

I hope you enjoy!

November 7th, 1986. It had been three years since Eleven escaped Hawkins National Lab, was pulled out of the rain, and met the friends she loved.

The fact that it was all over never really set into her. A part of her was still always paranoid that any second the Demogorgon would come out of the walls or the bad men would drive up in their trucks.

Fear had overtaken her at first. Constant paranoia. Never ending anxiety. It took a long time and a lot of support from her friends to help ease her nerves.

She wasn't the same girl as back two years ago. She'd learn to come out of her shell, she spoke more and she learned about what the world was really like.

It wasn't until a few weeks before that El had finally realized it was all over. Hopper, who'd adopted her all those years back, was sitting for breakfast. She'd joined him, her eating Eggos and him sipping coffee and reading the paper.

She saw something in the headlines that caught her eye. Plastered right across the front read:

GOVERNMENT SHUTS DOWN HAWKINS NATIONAL LAB

El felt her heart stop for a second and she took a sharp intake of break.

Hopper noticed. He knew she'd find out, but he didn't want to tell her.

"Government decided their experiments were a waste of funds," He started to ramble, "Now they're just shutting the whole place down."

El was silent at that. Her heart was racing and she didn't know how to feel.

That's feeling lasted a couple of weeks, up until the three year anniversary of her escape.

They boys all knew the date. They all knew how the others were feeling, but it was a sensitive subject to which they all ignored.

They decided to have a Dungeons and Dragons game to take their mind off it. It worked to some extent, they all got so wrapped up in their fantasy they started to forget about their own.

It didn't help El though. The boys had all noticed the change in her behavior the past few weeks. She had curled back into the scared girl they met those years ago.

It was after the game when Dustin, Lucas, and Will left that Mike invited her to stay at his house to watch a movie for a couple hours.

They'd started dating a few months ago, starting with awkward hand-holding and bashful kisses. They'd gone a few real dates, but for the most part El just enjoyed the quiet moments, like spending time with Mike in his basement. Away from everything else.

"What's going on?" He asked her, noticing her quietness.

El didn't want to talk about it. She simply put her eyes down and muttered, "The date. It's been three years."

Mike knew that, he knew how him and all the others were feeling

that day. The day that launched them into their week of Hell really. Mike himself had woken up with a nightmare the previous night, all the memories rushing back. It was an anniversary, but not a good one.

“Don’t think about it too much. It was tough back three years ago, but we’ve gotten through a lot worse,” he tried to reassure her, “Besides, think about the good stuff. That was the day we met.”

He reached out for her hand and gave a quick kiss to it.

She was silent for a moment until Mike realized.

“That’s not what’s really bothering you is it?”

She looked at him and his large eyes stared right at her. She couldn’t lie to him, she never could. So she took a deep breath and began.

“The lab, it closed a couple of weeks ago.”

Mike didn’t know what to say. Of course he knew, the entire town was talking about it, conspiracies spreading on why it closed. He never approached El about it, he didn’t want to remind her of everything.

He suddenly felt like an idiot. Everyone was obsessing over the lab closing, it was the biggest news event in a long time. She was probably being reminded of it every day since then, and he never even thought to reach out to her about it.

“I want to go there,” She broke the silence.

“Wha-”

El cut him off, “It’s empty now. They’re all gone. I want to see the place one more time.”

She could see the concerned expression on his face. He didn’t want her going there at all.

“I spent twelve years locked up there. I need to see what it’s like without all the bad men. I need to see it now that it can’t hurt me

anymore.”

It was dead silent. The only noises being their breathing. Mike was obviously thinking about the lab, he had that expression on his face he always did when he was reminded of El's past. The mix of sadness and anger and guilt plastered across him.

“Mike-”

“If you're going then I'm coming with you,” he finally spoke, “I'm not letting you go there alone.”

“The bad men aren't there anymore, no one's going to come for me,” she insisted.

“I know. But I want to be there for you when you go.”

She put her arms around his neck and hugged him tight. She knew she would feel better if she went there. Mike couldn't understand it, but it was something she needed to do.

The next day they headed over to the abandoned Hawkins National Lab. El sat behind Mike on his bike in complete silence the entire way. The boys had taught her to ride on her own, but she still preferred riding with Mike.

They arrived to where security once stopped people from entering. They got off the bike and Mike dropped it onto the ground.

Mike took a second to look around, but El just walked ahead in a daze towards the entrance.

She took it all in, the place that stole her childhood from her. She walked ahead of Mike, not listening to anything he was calling out to her.

She felt her breathing start to speed up. She started to concentrate on breathing in and out, in and out, like Hopper had taught her so long ago to help with nightmares.

El looked around. The entire place was white and clean, just as the bad men always presented themselves, as if they didn't have an

uncountable amount of blood on their hands.

She stopped short when she saw a crack in the wall. It had been over three years, and they still never fixed the enormous dent from her self defense.

This was it, her old room. Her face went white. She remembered Mike was there when she felt his hand squeeze hers reassuringly.

“Is this..?” He started, not wanting to finish the question.

She nodded her head and took a step inside.

They had cleared it out, whether from her escape or from the closing she would never know. All that remained was a small toy lying in the corner.

That was when the tears came. She dropped to her knees and before she knew it she was sobbing on the floor of her old “room”, or cell, as Mike called it.

He kneeled down next to her unsure of what to say. She clutched the small stuffed animal, memories rushing back to all those nights spent crying onto the tiger. The only real possession she had in there. It was still stained from all the nosebleeds she wiped away with it.

Mike stood there, about to cry himself. All his anger was coming out. He hated this place, he wished El never insisted on coming here. He hated that she ever had to be there and he hated that it could still hurt her like this. He felt useless just sitting there, because the girl he loved was sobbing right beside him and there was absolutely nothing he could do to help.

Then a tear echoed in the room. El had ripped off one of the legs. Her face, still ridden with tears, took a much angrier, determined expression. She started to rip the toy, once all she had but now just a symbol for all the pain.

She kept ripping at it, grunting and making small yelps as she pulled limb and limb off the tiger, yanking all the stuffing out in frustration. Her tears were pouring out now but she couldn't stop. She wanted to destroy it, she wanted to destroy every part of the lab. She just

wanted it all gone.

She threw the small toy down, standing up and starting to stomp on it, taking out all her anger and hatred on it. She finally kicked it aside and pulled Mike closer to her, sobbing into his shirt.

She wasn't sure how long she stood there, crying into Mike. He started to whisper small encouragements to her.

"It's all over now."

"They can't hurt you anymore."

"You survived, you got through it all."

She listened to his words, trying to calm herself down. Her cries eventually subsided, and she still remained hugging Mike like he would disappear from her at any moment, like she would be transported back to twelve years old, trapped and alone.

When her breathing finally took back a normal pace she pulled out of Mike's arms. She moved her hands to his cheeks, grabbing onto his face like she couldn't believe he was really there.

"Thank you for being here."

Mike was now crying, tears slowly falling down his cheeks, "I'm always gonna be here for you. I promise, I'm not going anywhere."

At that she started to cry again, but different this time. Her tears weren't angry or hateful, they were relieved.

His arms were now wrapped around her back.

"You've always got me, you know that right?" His voice was cracking with emotion, "You aren't in here anymore. You've got me and the guys and the chief and all of us and we love you so goddamn much, El."

Mike was now sobbing himself, clutching onto El, terrified she wouldn't understand.

"I love you so much," El pulled him into a hug, clutching him, knowing she wasn't the same love-deprived girl she was back in the lab. She'd gotten out, she got everything that the bad men refused her, she survived this place and she was proud of that.

Instead of answering Mike just tightened the hug, holding her like he never wanted to let go. When they pulled away he wiped the tears from his face. They spent several moments simply listening to each other's breathing, just thankful they had the other to listen to.

She reached for his hand and he held on so tight he thought he must be cutting off her circulation, but he couldn't bring himself to stop.

They started to walk out when El stopped short. Mike looked at her quizzically.

"There's one more place I want to see before I leave."

'Before I leave.' Mike knew she meant so much more than just leaving the building. She was leaving behind everything, she was leaving behind the place that took so much from her and she was leaving behind all the pain she'd kept for so long.

Mike had never been to the lab before, but when El stopped he knew exactly where they were.

A titanic, empty, glass tank lay before them. The bathtub, the place where it all began really.

"Mike, cover your ears."

He did so without a question, but that still didn't do much to block out the high pitched scream El had let out.

She threw all her emotions into the scream, all her hatred for that bathtub. The glass began to crack, her powers damaging it.

A shatter just as loud as the scream itself boomed throughout the empty building and the tank broke into billions of small fragments.

El's scream ended when she ran out of breath. Mike took his hands away from his head. She was breathing deeply, obviously exhausted.

This entire experience was draining.

And there it was, the bathtub, the place El hated most of this entire goddamn building, shattered and sitting in a heap of destroyed glass.

El didn't say anything after, she stood for a few moments to catch her breath, then turned around, turning her back on it all, and walking away.

When the duo got outside, the fall wind hitting them, El stopped and turned to Mike. She wanted to say something, to say how grateful she was, to say how everything felt. But some thoughts can't be expressed with words. Fortunately Mike knew exactly what she was thinking.

They gave each other looks, having an entire mental conversation that said more than they ever could out loud. All the emotions and thoughts poured out without a single word.

And with that, Mike grabbed El's hand and they walked back towards the bike, leaving the lab behind them, further away with each step they took.

Author's Note:

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